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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

poor captive's amusement in prison makes us think that the famous verses beginning, "Stone walls do not a prison make," would have first figured on glass had their author been able to find any.

On the window of a house of one of the evicted tenants on a certain estate in Ireland were found inscribed, apparently in the handwriting of the tenant's wife, these lines :

I am evicted from this house,
Me and my loving man,
I am homeless now upon the world;
May the d— take the Plan—

which if not elegant are to the point.

In these days of cheap diamonds it is no wonder that even public conveyances should furnish their quota to these glass gleanings. A friend of the writer's saw this on a train window :

What *pains* some people take to write
What only is obscuring to the sight,
And snake-like leave their trailings as they pass
In serpentine-like traces on the glass.

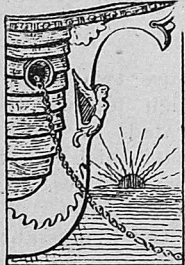
A better one was scratched on a cab window.

I hailed a "growler" to escape the snow,
As that old "chestnut" says—"for w(h)ea! or woe."
The four-wheeler has no word to say,
But I have kept on growling all the way,
And 'twill be cabby's turn to growl and swear
If I've the nerve to pay "the legal fare."

DECORATIVE ART AND FASHION.

By JOHN WARD.

(Continued from our October number.)



OR more economical purposes the richly-colored plain, glazed tiles are more satisfactory than the badly-printed and worse painted cheap tiles that more generally find favor in the eyes of the shopman and public, and are duly dubbed "art tiles." Many well-designed and well-printed tiles are spoiled by an incongruous dab of color at intervals, put on mechanically, to meet a demand, because the public like a bit of color to liven the thing

Next, there is the grate itself, which undergoes from time to time the changes, not so much of requirements as of fashion. Sometimes it is the treatment of the material,—all bright,—nickel-plated, polished brass, electro bronze, all have their turn as a fashion. Then there is the form of the grate. Until recent years we found the circular grate almost everywhere, except in a few older houses, where the hob stoves had been left from early in the century. The improvement in the shape of the grates took place with the introduction of tiles, which in the earlier stages dictated a simpler form of metal-work; but as the newness of the tiles has worn away, the designer has been importuned to get something new so often, and instructed to imitate other things in order to be *en suite* (it is a fashion to have everything *en suite*), that, instead of improving the form of the grates, many are contorted out of all suitability of purpose, and in years to come, after the glamour of fashion has died away, will be viewed with the same distaste as the circular grates referred to.

The best form of grate for ordinary purposes is the canopy interior fitted with good tile cheeks, without any of the outer metal framework. The canopy, to a certain extent, is a fashion, but it has its uses; it is correct in theory, and is only wrong when twisted into some startlingly original outline to meet the demand for something new, or when it is over-decorated to appease a sensual appetite for ornamentation.

The article to be considered in sequence to the fire-grate is the chimney-piece. The latest fashion in this appears to be in tile work, which, I think, is carrying the introduction of tiles too far. Uniformity is the destruction of art: tiles are excellent, both from a point of variety when introduced in conjunction with other materials, and as a non-conducting protection when the mantelpiece is of wood; but for the mantelpiece itself, wood, marble, or even iron, are more suitable for economical use,—good designs on soft wood painted in the same scheme with the other decoration of the room. If fancy marble chimney-pieces are used, they should be ornamented by means of simple mouldings, but fashion is the greatest enemy to these simple treatments. When it is fashionable to have an imposing chimney-piece, if funds will not allow of following the fashion in a comparatively legitimate way, enamel slate is called in to feebly imitate costly marbles, or cast-iron to imitate expensive and richly-carved woodwork. I do not mean to condemn iron chimney-pieces, they meet a demand, and can meet that demand creditably, if treated, as I have suggested for soft woods, by simply painting them in

the general scheme of the room; but to paint them as pollard oak, with the idea that thus treated they will match the side-board, is at once wrong and futile, as the absurdity will show somewhere. I have seen the groundwork of such a chimney-piece painted and enamelled so well as to defy ocular detection, but the treatment of the ornament in the same chimney-piece showed the futility of the sham. If treated in the way I have suggested, for many purposes they are better suited to our use than the carton pierre decorated softwood work; firstly, the decoration cannot chip off; and, secondly, coat after coat of paint, which in time would imperil the sharpness of the ornamental details, can in iron be easily burned off without risk. How frequently do we see what would be good specimens of late eighteenth-century work almost completely ruined in its details by the accumulation of paint.

With the mantel-piece much be considered the fashionable overmantel. A few years ago, as before stated, the gilt framed pier-glass held complete sway, but now the modern overmantel has completely routed it and taken its place. Generally it is an improvement, but not when it is built up, shelf after shelf, bracket after bracket, and the whole surmounted by some eccentric device in the form of a pediment, and lit up with innumerable bevelled mirrors, not made as a cabinet to exhibit choice pottery or curios of the collector, but to follow a fashion. The collection comes afterwards, if at all; in most cases the collection is bought to fit the overmantel. If it were otherwise we might hope to keep this modern article within proper limits, and made in a way best suited to display one's treasures. When work is made for a given purpose, and that purpose is not lost sight of, it is easy to make it in good taste; but as soon as requirements are overlooked, pomp and vulgarity assert themselves, and there is no place for art which is modest and not self-assertive. It is always the simplicity that compels our admiration in the old work.

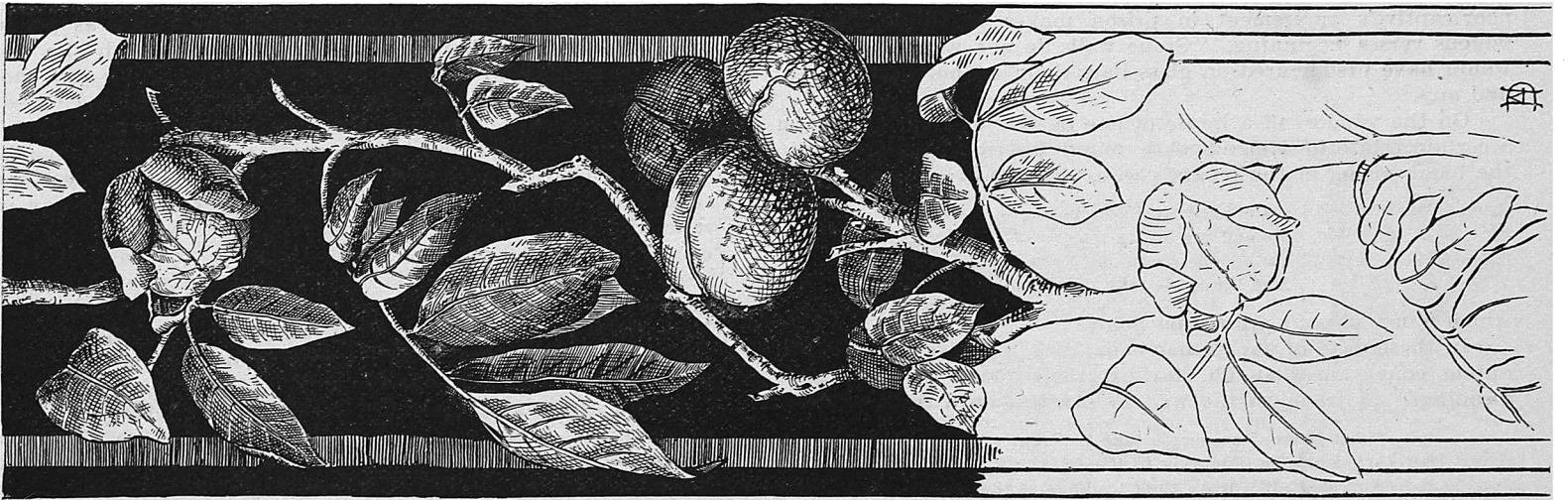
The next thing we will consider is the modern introduction of stained glass for the decoration everywhere of domestic and



DESIGN FOR WOOD CARVING IN LOW RELIEF, FROM A PANEL IN SPURR'S VENEER.

commercial buildings. This again, in itself, might be a most excellent introduction, but both its use and treatment are sadly abused.

It is a fashion, and every other consideration takes a second place. For exposed windows, or windows with objectionable outlooks, it might be perfection, hiding at once an objectionable sight, and being a means of introducing color; but this is not enough; instead of a modest design in interlaced leadwork, finished with a suitable border, where the more marked colors may be introduced, it must be divided up into panels, and those panels "decorated" with wonderful "art" productions, according to the manufacturers' artful advertisement. There are beautiful works of art executed in stained glass for domestic purposes, and one delights in seeing such, but nine-tenths of the stained glass one sees in the interests of art should not have been "decorated." But I have said stained glass is not introduced because of its fitness for a given purpose with these nine-tenths, it is introduced to follow the fashion, and, beyond that, its merits or fitness are never considered. Look at the stained glass abortions we see in some of the houses of our friends who profess to make a hobby of their pictures! Would they care to



WALNUTS, BY HARRY A. DEANE.

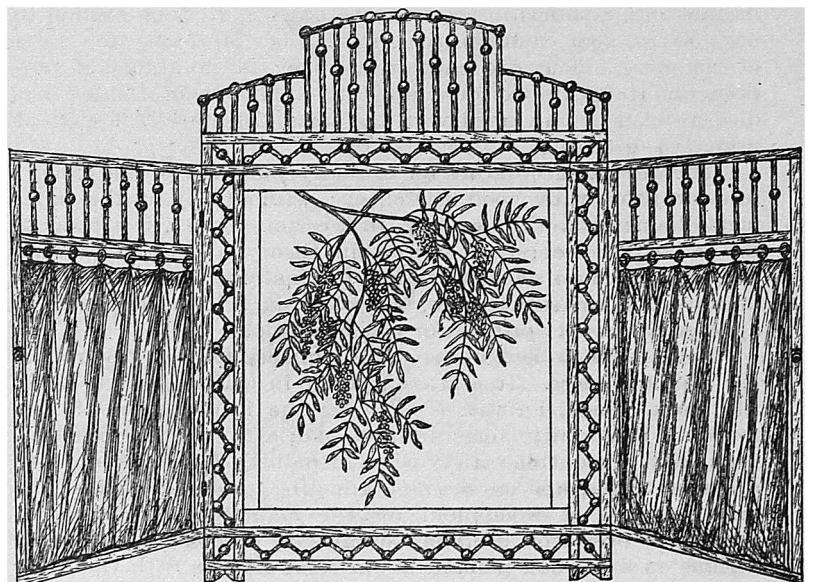
frame and hang such work on paper or canvas? I think not; then if the occasion will not commend the expenditure for creditable work, why should good economical materials be spoilt with bad treatment? Our friends condemn with contempt the efforts of the typical "Arry" in his attempts to beautify and decorate himself according to his lights, yet in their homes they give evidence of the same want of taste. We will next consider the trade of the art decorators and house-painters. How few of these know anything at all about the principles of decoration. The exigencies of commerce have overthrown any intuition they may have possessed or may have acquired from the practice of decoration. They do not even know when they have finished a job whether it is well or ill done, much less, in theory, how to commence with certainty. Generally, they work on mechanical lines, and these lines are ruled by custom or fashion. It is not long since it was the custom to oak-grain and feebly imitate other woods; but, fortunately, in this case, fashion has caused this to be less frequently done, but as long as the influence of fashion is supreme, there is the fear of a return to these things, and I think a large number of so-called decorators would hail with satisfaction the return to the fashion of imitations of grained woods, because it is a more expensive process, and thus puts more profit into their pockets.

The only valid excuse for this treatment of woodwork has been its durability, but the extra expense should be considered against this. Perhaps one of the most successful arguments against plain painting for general use is in consequence of the flattening process, and I would suggest that this flattening process is not suitable for everyday use, and therefore not so artistic as some of its advocates would wish it to be considered. The common fitness-of-things principle condemns its general use, but this is no real argument against plain painting, which may be done in the ordinary way, and where constant use endangers the wear, the parts may be varnished. Varnish has been much abused by some art critics, but they have only spoken theoretically and not practically.

Varnish properly used will aid their theories of decoration to a practical issue; the varnish is much more durable in wear than paint, and if the work is properly done the objectionable highly-glazed appearance is not a necessity. Work may be done where the panels or protected portions are a half-flat, and the styles and unprotected portions varnished; yet there is no incongruity. The work thus executed is durable and serviceable, and, therefore, may be artistic, whereas a door treated in the flattened way may or may not be artistic. If it is subjected to much soiling it shows in such a treatment a want of thought and regard for the common fitness of things. The decorator's work is, perhaps, more subject to the caprices of fashion in its details than other branches of these art industries. Take, for example, Wall-papers; scarcely any paper-stainer repeats his patterns more than two or three seasons, and it is almost impossible if you have a favorite room to your satisfaction to have it re-decorated in exactly the same way. You are forced against your will to follow the fashions. For some years past I have had opportunity and necessity to see a number of the paper-stainers' pattern-books, and I regret to have formed the opinion that what I hoped was a general improvement in the designs of wall-papers a few years ago has already given place to less meritorious work—designs without context of form or of color. The papers of the inartistic past have been condemned in many instances because they were powder patterns of pronounced type, that is to say, bunches or sprays of flowers at given intervals, making lines that cross and re-cross, which have compelled the disordered mind during illness to attempt to count these endless ornaments; and the fevered brain has seen them, after vainly endeavoring to accomplish the task, rush madly after each other, thus rendering the self-imposed task impossible, but denying the patient the hope of rest. Such papers have been rightly condemned,

but what is the use of an all-over pattern if some individual flower, which, from the nature of the manufacture must recur at intervals, is pounced upon for individual treatment of color, in opposition to the harmony of the remainder of the composition? and it is the custom of some paper-stainers to perpetrate such errors. Designs which give one the idea of having been carefully worked out by the designer are thus treated to "liven" them up, and give them "character." This it accomplishes, it is true, but then it is a bad character. An ideal wall-paper should be so designed and colored that no individual part of it should be aggressive or assertive, and the delineation and color of the details only apparent when the eye actually inquires into its composition. Following this idea, I do not think flock-papers the best treatment for the general surface of the wall, but they might be used for dado and frieze work.

WITH all the variations in forms of furniture two leading divisions are apparent—one being that which follows the architectonic type in design, chiefly illustrated in cabinets, sideboards, buffets and bookcases, and that which adopts graceful and convenient forms irrespective of specific styles, with or without the exhibit of the main constructive features. We range all the classic styles as architectonic. In the Renaissance period such designs entered, together with extraneous ornament, into every article of furniture, but their abandonment in other than massive articles of furniture—a certain conformity in suites being retained so far as character of framework is concerned, or its general contour—has resulted in endless variety, the more so that the opinion is no longer held with the Eastlake enthusiasts that the constructive framework should be necessarily visible or its strength for its purpose apparent, or curvilinear forms in wood rejected. We take for granted in the case of an article of furniture, such as a sofa or armchair in which not a particle of framework is visible, that its strength is sufficient for its purpose, satisfied with its general form.



DESIGN FOR SCREEN, BY E. A. HALSTED.

DIRECTIONS FOR TREATMENT.—An effective center could be painted on a background of soft gray-green or any other neutral tint. The berries are quite bright and the leaves a fresh green. The color for the berries is crimson lake with a touch of burnt sienna. Some might be painted bright and some a pale green, with here and there a suspicion of red. The fine feathery blossoms are a delicate straw color. For the leaves use gamboge, cobalt and a very little crimson. The design would be equally effective in embroidery. For the side curtains use plush a shade or two deeper than the background of the center panel or the mode shades.